

## COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

# Note makers come in three styles

Out of the dozens available, there are three wonderful programs for personal computers that let you retrieve notes, lists and other information, even while you're in the middle of other applications.

The three are Smart Notes; Tornado, formerly called Tornado Notes; and Memory Mate. Each has several advantages and disadvantages when compared to the other two.

All are memory resident, which means they share a computer's memory with whatever other programs you're working on. Thus, you can see the data they contain instantly, without unloading one program and loading another. All you do is press a previously defined "hot key," such as Alt-Z, and it pops on the screen.

But each differs in the way it displays data. Smart Notes, for example, uses little boxes of data that automatically appear attached to other documents, files or data. The

boxes can be in different colors if you have a color monitor, and work just like the little yellow Post-It Notes used in almost all business offices.

Tornado, on the other hand, only appears on the screen when you call it up, but then dumps all your notes on the screen at the same time, like an overlapping pile of paper. All your notes can be accessed in one fell swoop. You can, of course, display only certain notes — and the ease with which this is done is one of its highlights. But its major advantage is that all your information is available to you all the time. It's

the ultimate "cluttered desk" approach.

Memory Mate is very much like Tornado, but uses an entire screen for each record, instead of small boxes or rectangles. The effect is much more orderly, but you can't view two or more small boxes of data at the same time. It's the

whole screen or nothing.

Each has its pros and cons, and each is best suited for different types of situations. Here's how each stacks up:

■ **Memory Mate** is from Broderbund Software, San Rafael, Calif., and costs \$73.45. It has one major advantage over the other two. It can be used as a free-form data base with thousands of screensize records. Almost any piece of data can be instantly located since every word is indexed. This is an unusual and spectacular feature. Also, it can be set up as either a memory resident program, available simultaneously with other programs, or as an ordinary program without the simultaneous feature. This is another advantage, because memory resident programs are more apt to conflict with other programs and cause you to lose data.

■ **Tornado** is from Micrologic Corp., Hackensack, N.J., and costs \$103.35. This program makes no pretense about substituting for a data base. It likens itself, rather, to a new type of work environment — but has the ability to instantly find

any record based upon any character-string search. It can duplicate Memory Mate's format, but can't handle as much data.

■ **Smart Notes**, from Personics Corp. of Concord, Mass., costs \$79.95. It is very different from the other two, because it's intended for another purpose altogether — as a reminder system, rather than a data base or work environment. Nonetheless, it's my favorite because of its automatic pop-up feature. With both the others, you have to remember to look for the information in the first place.

*The bottom line:* For my own use, I found Smart Notes to be the handiest of the three. I like Tornado, but haven't yet become addicted to it like so many others. And Memory Mate has some attractive features, but with a new version due out soon, I'd suggest waiting.

*Hillel Segal is an independent computer consultant and author of the monthly Executive Computing Newsletter, published by the Association of Computer Users, P.O. Box 9003, Boulder 80301.*



Segal